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T R U T H S

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O F T H E

GREATEST CONCERN

TO THE

S O U L

O F

EVERY INDIVIDUAL.

By a sincere Lover of the Whole Human Race.

SECOND EDITION.

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ADVERTISEMENT

to the Reader of this Second Edition.

THE original Author, from whose invaluable Works, the following Extracts have been compiled, by a sincere Lover of the whole human Race, was a Person of such distinguished Talents, and so masterly a Pen, as to have been universally admired. All which, on a farther Manifestation of divine Truth, he counted but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord; counting it but Dung, that he might win, and be found in, Christ, &c.

On Subjects of this Nature and Importance for the Heart of Man, it must be owned, that he became afterwards the most extensive Reader, and as eminent a Writer, in his Time. And the best is, that what he wrote was from inward Experience, and a faithful Practice: He wrote as he felt, and lived; and lived as he wrote: Which also continued to the End of his precious and useful Life.

At the advanced Age of seventy-five, under the most excruciating Pain of the Stone, he took his Flight to Bliss; and the heavenly Glory opened in him, so that he broke forth into the following Exultation:

“ Away with these filthy Garments!—I feel a sacred
“ Fire, kindled in my Soul; which will destroy every Thing
“ contrary to itself, and burn as a Flame of divine Love to
“ all Eternity.”

As he, by this little Piece, yet speaketh; may we also, dear Reader, follow him, as he followed Christ, and thus arrive at the same desirable Goal, and End!

N. B. This Piece being out of Print, the Re-publisher has not only corrected some Faults in the Orthography and Punctuation; but has taken the further Liberty of adding and altering a Word or two here and there in the Text; and also to subjoin, by Way of Note, some few pertinent Passages, which occurred to his Mind, from the same ample Source with the Rest.

APRIL 26, 1790.

ETERNAL TRUTHS.



THE Fall of Man into the Life and State of this World, is the whole *Ground* of his Redemption; and a real Birth of CHRIST in the Soul, is the whole *Nature* of it. To *convince* Man of his Fall, as the Ground of his Redemption, it is not absolutely and alone necessary to appeal to the History which Moses has given of it; because Moses's History of the Fall is not the most immediate and adequate Proof of it, and because a *mere* historical Knowledge of the Fall would not do Man any real Good. Moses has recorded the Death of the first Man, and of many of his Descendents; but the direct Proof that Man is mortal, lies not merely in Moses's History, but in the known Nature of Man, and the World from which he has his Life. Thus, though Moses has by divine Inspiration recorded the Time and Manner of the Fall; yet there is no more Occasion to have Recourse to his History to prove it, in this Point of View, than to prove that Man is "a poor, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, depraved, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing Creature; and that the World is a sad Mixture of imaginary Good, and real Evil, a mere Scene of Vanity, Vexation, and Misery!" This is the known Nature and Condition both of Man and the World; and every Man is, in himself, an irresistible Proof that he is in a fallen State. An Attempt, therefore, to *convince* Man of his Fall, as the *Ground* of his Redemption, must be an Attempt to do *that*, which Misfortunes, Sickness, Pain, and the Approach of Death, hath a natural Tendency to do; namely, to convince him of the Vanity, Poverty, and Misery of his Life and Condition in this World; and

how impossible it is, that a God, who has nothing in himself but infinite Goodness and infinite Happiness, should bring forth a Race of intelligent Creatures, that have neither natural Goodness, nor natural Happiness.

Man, in his first State, as he came forth from God, must have been absolutely free from all Vanity, Want, or Distress, of every Kind, from any Thing either within or without him: A God-like Perfection of Nature, and a painful distressed Nature, stand in the utmost Contrariety to one another: But Man having lost his first divine Life in God; every Thing that we know of God, and every Thing that we know of Man, of his Birth, his Life, and Death, is a continual irresistible Proof that Man is in a *fallen State*. The human Infant just come out of the Womb, is a Picture of such Deformity, Nakedness, Weakness, and helpless Distress, as is not to be found amongst the *home-born* Animals of this World. The Chicken has its Birth from no Sin, and therefore, comes forth in Beauty; it runs and pecks, as soon as its Shell is broken: The Calf and the Lamb go both to Play as soon as the Dam is delivered of them; they are pleased with themselves, and please the Eye that beholds their frolic State, and beauteous Clothing: Whilst the new-born Babe of a Woman, that is to have an *upright* Form; that is to view the Heavens, and worship the God that made it, lies, for Months, in gross Ignorance, Weakness, and Impurity; as sad a Spectacle, when he first breathes the Life of this World, as when in the Agonies of Death he breathes his last. What is all this, but the strongest Proof, that Man is the only Creature that belongs not properly to this World, but is fallen into it through Sin; and that, therefore, his Birth, in such Distress; bears all these Marks of Guilt, Shame, and Weakness? (Rom. v. 12--14.) Had he been originally of this World, this World would have done the highest Honour to its highest Creature; and he must have begun his Life in greater Perfection than any other Animal, and brought with him a more beautiful Clothing than the finest Lilies of the Field. But
farther,

farther, when the human Infant has at length acquired Strength, and begins to act for himself, he soon becomes a more pitiable Object than when crying in the Cradle. " The Strength of his Life, is a mere Strength of wild " Passions; his Reason is Craft and selfish Subtilty; " he loves and hates only as Flesh and Blood prompt " him; and Jails and Gibbets cannot keep him from " Theft and Murder. If he is rich, he is tormented " with Pride and Ambition; if poor, with Want and " Discontent: Be he which he will, sooner or later, " disordered Passions, disappointed Lusts, fruitless " Labour, Pains and Sickness, will tear him from this " World, in such Travail as his Mother felt, when she " brought forth the sinful Animal." Now all this Evil and Misery are the natural and necessary Effects of his Birth in the bestial Flesh and Blood of this World; and there is nothing in his natural State, that can put a Stop to it; he *must* be evil and miserable, as long as he has *only* the Life of this World in him. Therefore, the absolute Certainty of Man's Fall, and the absolute Necessity of a new Birth, to redeem him, are Truths of Fact, independently of Scripture, and plain to a Demonstration.

No Creature can come, from the Hands of God, into a State of Ignorance of any Thing that is proper to be known by it; this is as impossible, as for God to have an envious or evil Will. Now all right and natural Knowledge, in whatever Creature it is, is sensible, *intuitive*, and its own Evidence; and *Opinion, Reasoning, or Doubting*, can only then begin, when the Creature has lost its first right, and natural State; and is got somewhere, and become Somewhat, that it cannot tell what to make of. Reasoning, Doubt, and Perplexity, in any Creature, are the Effects of some Fall or Departure from its first State of Nature; and shew, that it wants, and is seeking, Something that belongs to its Nature, but knows not how to come at it. The Beasts seek not after Truth; a plain Proof, that it has no Relation to them, no Suitableness to their Nature, nor ever belonged to them. Man is in Quest of it, in Perplexity about

it, cannot come at it; takes Lies to be Truth, and Truth to be Lies; a plain Proof, both that he has it *not*, and yet *has* had it; was created in it, and for it; for "no Creature can seek for any Thing, but *that*, which has been lost, and is wanted: Nor could Man form the least Idea of it, but because it has belonged to him, and ought to be his."

Now suppose Man to come into the World, with this chief Difference from other Creatures, that he is at a Loss to find out what he is, how he is to live, and what he is to seek as his chief Happiness; what he is to own of a God, of Providence, Religion, &c.; suppose him to have Faculties that put him upon this Search, and no Faculties that can satisfy his Inquiry; what, I pray, can we suppose more miserable in itself, and more unworthy a GOOD CREATOR? Therefore, if we will not suppose, that God has been good to all Creatures, and given every Animal its proper Light of Nature, except Man; we must be forced to own, that Man has lost the true Light and Perfection of his Nature, which God at first gave him.

God is, in himself, infinite Truth, infinite Goodness, and infinite Happiness; but Man, in his present earthly Birth and Life, has neither Truth, Goodness, nor Happiness: Therefore, his present State of Life could not be brought forth immediately by that God, who is all Truth, Goodness, and Happiness. Thus every Man, that believes in a Creator infinitely perfect, is under a Necessity of believing the whole Ground of CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION; namely, that Man has lost that Perfection of Life which he had at first from his Creator.

Had not a divine Life *at first* been in Man, he would be *now* at the same Distance from Truth and Goodness, and as incapable of forming the least Thought or Desire of them, as the Beasts of the Field; and would have Nothing to do, but to look to *himself*, live to his earthly Nature, and make the most of this World: For this is all the Wisdom and Goodness, that an earthly Nature
is

is capable of, whether it be a Man, or a Fox. The Certainty of the Fact, of Man's first divine Life, is all ; Nothing more need be enquired after : For on this Ground stands all his Comfort ; hence it is, that in Faith and Hope he can look up to God as his Father, to Heaven as his native Country, and on himself as *a Stranger and a Pilgrim upon Earth.*

For it is a certain Truth, that fallen, earthly, and corrupt, as human Nature is, there is, in the Soul of every Man, THE FIRE, AND LIGHT, AND LOVE OF GOD, though lodged in a State of Hiddenness and Inactivity, till Something human or divine, Distress or Grace, or both, discover its Life within us.

We were no more created to be in the Sorrows, Burdens, and Anguish of this earthly Life, than the Angels were created to be in the Wrath and Darkeness of Hell : It is as contrary to the Will and Goodness of God towards us, that we are out of Paradise, as it is contrary to the Designs and Goodness of God towards the Angels, that some of them are out of Heaven, Prisoners of Darkeness. How absurd and even blasphemous would it be, to say, with the Church and the Scriptures, that " we are Children of Wrath, and born in Sin," if we had that Nature, which God at first gave us ? What a Reproach upon God, to say, that this World is a Valley of Misery, a Shadow of Death, full of Disorders, Sorrows, and Temptations, if this was an *original* Creation, or that State of Things for which God created us ? Is it not as consistent with the Goodness of God, to speak of the Misery and Disorder that holy Angels find above, and of the Sorrows and Vanity of their heavenly State, as to speak of the Misery of Men, and the Sorrows and Vanity of this World, if Men and the World were in that Order, in which God at first had placed them ? If God could make any Place poor and vain, and create any Beings into a State of Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, he might do so in all Places, and to all Beings.

“ The Fall of Man, therefore, into the Life of this
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earthly

“ earthly World, is the sole Ground of his wanting
 “ the Redemption which the Gospel offers.”* Hence
 it is, that the Gospel has only one simple Proposal of
 certain Life, or certain Death, to Man: Of Life, if
 he will take the Means of entering into the Kingdom
 of God; of Death, if he chooses to take up his Rest
 in the Kingdom of this World. This is the simple
 Nature and sole Drift of the Gospel: It means no more,
 than Making known to Man, that this World, and the
 Life of it, is his Fall and Separation from God and
 Happiness both here and hereafter; and that to be
 saved, or restored to God and Happiness, can only be
 obtained, by Renouncing all Love and Adherence to
 the Things of this World. “ All the Precepts,
 “ Threatenings, and Doctrines of the Gospel, mean
 “ Nothing, but to drive all Earthly-mindedness and
 “ carnal Affections out of the Soul; to call Man from
 “ the Life, Spirit, and Goods of this World, to a Life
 “ of Faith and Hope, and Love, and Desire, of a new
 “ Birth from Heaven.”

To embrace the Gospel, is to enter, with all our
 Hearts, into its Terms of dying to all that is earthly,
 both within us and without us: And, on the other
 Hand, to place our Faith, and Hope, and Trust, and
 Satisfaction, in the Things of this World, is to reject
 the Gospel with our whole Heart, Spirit, and Strength,
 as much as any *Infidel* can do, notwithstanding we
 make ever so many *verbal* Assents to every Thing that
 is recorded in the New Testament.

This, therefore, is the one, true, essential Distinc-
 tion between the CHRISTIAN and the INFIDEL. The
Infidel is a Man of this World, wholly devoted to it;
 his Hope and Faith are set upon it; for where our Heart
 is,

* Hence you see why our Saviour, who though he had all Wis-
 dom, and came to be the Light of the World, is yet so *short* in his
 Instructions, and gives so small a Number of Doctrines to Mankind;
 whilst every moral Teacher writes Volumes upon every single
 Virtue.—A Traveller, who has taken a wrong Road, does not want
 an Orator to discourse to him on the Nature of Roads; but to be
 told, in short, which is his right Way.—The shipwrecked Man
 wants only to get to Shore.

is, there, and there only, are our Hope and Faith: He has only such a Virtue, such a Goodness, and such a Religion, as entirely suits with the Interests of Flesh and Blood, and keeps the Soul happy in "*the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life.*" This, and this alone, is Infidelity; a total Separation from GOD, and a Removal of all Faith and Hope from Him, into the Life of this World. It matters not, whether this Infidel be a Professor of the Gospel, a Disciple of Zoroaster, a Follower of Plato, a Jew, a Turk, or an Opposer of the Gospel-History: This Difference of Opinions or Professions, alters not the Matter; it is the Love of the World instead of GOD, that constitutes the whole Nature of the Infidel.

On the other Hand, the *Christian* renounces the World as his horrid Prison; he dies to the Will of Flesh and Blood, because it is Darknes, Corruption, and Separation from GOD; he turns from all that is earthly, animal, and temporal, and stands in a continual Tendency of Faith, and Hope, and Prayer to GOD, to have a better Nature, a better Life and Spirit, born again into him from above.

Where *this FAITH is*, there is the Christian, the "*new Creature in CHRIST, born of the Word and Spirit of GOD:*" Neither Time nor Place, nor any outward Condition of Birth and Life, can hinder his Entrance into the Kingdom of GOD. But where this Faith is *not*, there is the true complete Infidel, "*the Man of the Earth,*" the Unredeemed, the Rejecter of the Gospel, "*the Son of Perdition,*" that is "*dead in Trespasses and Sins, without CHRIST, an Alien from the Commonwealth of Israel, a Stranger to the Covenant of Promise, having no Hope, and without GOD in the World.*"

Men are apt to consider a *worldly Spirit* only as an Infirmary, or pardonable Failure; but it is, indeed, the great APOSTASY from GOD and the divine Life: It is not a single Sin, but the whole Nature of all Sin; that leaves no Possibility of coming out of our fallen

State, till it be totally renounced with all the Strengths of our Hearts.

Our LORD says, "*there is but one that is good, and that is GOD.*" In the same Strictness of Expression it must be said, "There is but one Life that is good, and that is THE LIFE OF GOD AND HEAVEN:" Depart, in the least Degree, from the Goodness of GOD, and you depart into Evil; because nothing is good, but his Goodness. Choose *any* Life, but THE LIFE OF GOD AND HEAVEN, and you choose Death; for Death is nothing else but the Loss of THE LIFE OF GOD. The Creatures of this World, have but one Life and one Good; and that is the Life of this World: Eternal Beings have but one Life, and one Good; and that is THE LIFE OF GOD. The Spirit of the Soul is in itself nothing else but a Spirit breathed forth from GOD, that the Life of GOD, the Nature of GOD, the Working of GOD, the Tempers of GOD, might be manifested in it. GOD could not create Man to have a Will of his own, and a Life of his own, different from the Life and Will that is in himself; this is more impossible, than for a good Tree to bring forth corrupt Fruit: GOD can only delight in his own Life, his own Goodness, and his own Perfections; and, therefore, cannot love, or delight, or dwell, in any Creatures, but where his own Goodness and Perfections are to be found: Like can only unite with like, Heaven with Heaven, and Hell with Hell; and, therefore, THE LIFE OF GOD must be the Life of the Soul, if the Soul is to unite with GOD. Hence it is, that all the Religion of fallen Man, all the Methods of our Redemption, have only this one End, to take from us that strange and earthly Life we have gotten by the Fall, and to kindle again THE LIFE OF GOD AND HEAVEN in our Souls: Not merely to deliver us from that gross and sordid Vice called Covetousness, which Heathens can condemn; but to take the Spirit of this World *entirely* from us.* This

* Our Life here is not *that*, which GOD first created; it is a Body of Sin, an Impurity in the Sight of GOD: And therefore it is a Life that must be *given up*, it must be crucified, dead and buried with

This *foreign Spirit* is the whole Nature and Misery of our Fall: It keeps our Souls in a State of Death; and, as long as it *governs*, makes it impossible for us to be "*born again from ABOVE.*" It is the greatest Blindness and Darkness of our Nature, and keeps us in the grossest Ignorance both of Heaven and Hell; for though they are both of them within us, yet we feel neither, while the Spirit of this World reigns in us. Light, and Truth, and the Gospel, so far as they concern Eternity, are all empty Sounds to the worldly Spirit: His own Good, and his own Evil, govern all his Hopes and Fears; and, therefore, he can have no Religion, or be farther concerned in it, than so far as it can be serviceable to the Life of this World: He can know Nothing of God; for he can know Nothing, feel Nothing, taste Nothing, delight in Nothing, but with earthly Senses, and after an earthly Manner. "*The natural Man,*" saith the Apostle, "*receiveth not the Things of THE SPIRIT OF GOD; they are Foolishness unto him: He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;*" that is, they can only be discerned by that Spirit, which he hath not: He can only contemplate them, as Things *foreign* to himself; as so

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many

with Christ. (Gal. ii. 20. v. 24. Rom. vi. 1--11. 1 Tim. ii. 11. &c.) before a Man can be released from his Sins. This is the one-only Ground of all the *Shedding of Blood* in Religion. Had not a Life *foreign* to the Kingdom of God, and utterly incapable of it, been introduced by the Fall, there had been no possible Room for the Death of any Creature, or the *Pouring out of any Blood*, as serviceable and instrumental to the raising fallen Man.—But when the *Divine Pity* of our Lord Jesus Christ suffered his own Life-giving Blood to be poured on the Ground, all outward Nature made full Declaration of its atoning and redeeming Power: The Strength of the Earth did quake; the Hardness of the Rocks was forced to split; and long-covered Graves to give up their Dead.—A certain Preface, that all that came by the *Curse* into Nature and Creature must give up its Power; that all Kinds of hellish *Wrath*, hardened *Malice*, fiery *Pride*, selfish *Wills*, tormenting *Envy*, and earthly *Passions*, which kept Men under the Power of Satan, must have their Fulness of Death, and Fulness of a new Life, from the all-powerful, all-purifying *Blood* of the LAMB.—

Sing, O ye Heavens, and shout all ye lower Parts of the Earth; for this is OUR GOD that varies not; whose first *creating Love* knows no Change, but into a *redeeming Pity* towards all his fallen Creatures! —Psal. civ. 30, 31. cxlv. 9, 10. 1 Cor. xv. 22. Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 20, compared with Heb. ii. 8. Rev. v. 13.

many changeable Ideas, which he receives from Books or Hearsay, and which become a bad Nourishment of all his natural Tempers: He is proud of his Ability to discourse about them, and loses all Humility, all Love of God and Man, through a vain and haughty Contention for them. He stands at the same Distance from a living Perception of the Truth, as the Man, that is born blind, does from a living Perception of Light; Light must first be the Birth of his own Life, before he can enter into a *real* Knowledge of it.

“ The Measure of our Life, is the Measure of our Knowledge; and as the Spirit of our Life worketh, so the Spirit of our Understanding conceiveth.” If our Will worketh with God, though our natural Capacity be ever so mean and narrow, we get a real Knowledge of God, and heavenly Truths: For every Thing must feel *that*, in which it lives: But if our Will worketh with Satan, and the Spirit of this World, let our Parts be ever so bright, our Imaginations ever so soaring; yet all our *living* Knowledge can go no higher or deeper, than the Mysteries of Iniquity, and the Lusts of Flesh and Blood. For Nothing feels, or tastes, or understands, or likes, or dislikes, but the Life that is in us; the Spirit that leads our Life, is the Spirit that forms our Understanding. The Mind is our Eye, and all the Faculties of the Mind see every Thing according to the State the Mind is in. If selfish Pride is the Spirit of our Life, every Thing is only seen, and known, through *this* Glass; every Thing is dark, senseless, and absurd, to the proud Man, but that which brings Food to this Spirit: He understands Nothing, feels Nothing, tastes Nothing, but as his Pride is made sensible of it, or capable of being affected with it. His working Will, which is the Life of his Soul, liveth and worketh only in the Element of Pride: And, therefore, what suits his Pride, is his only Good; and what contradicts his Pride, is all the Evil that he can feel or know; his Wit, his Parts, his Learning, his Advancement, his Friends, his Admirers, his Successes, his Conquests, all these are the only God and
Heaven

Heaven that he has any *living* Perception of : He indeed can talk of a Scripture-God, a Scripture-Christ, and Heaven ; but these are only the ornamental Furniture of his *Brain*, whilst Pride is the God of his *Heart*. We are told, that “ *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* ” This is not to be understood, merely as if God, by an arbitrary Will, only chose to deal thus with the proud and humble Man ; but the true Ground is this, The Resistance is on the Part of Man. Pride resisteth God, it rejecteth him, it turneth from him, and chooseth to worship and adore Something else instead of him ; whereas Humility leaveth all for God, falls down before him, and opens the whole Heart to receive him : This is the true Sense in which “ *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* ” And thus it is in the true Ground of every Good and Evil that rises up in us ; we have neither Good nor Evil, but as it is the natural Effect of the Working of our own Will, either with, or against God. Consider the State of him, whose working Will is under the Power of Wrath ; he sees, and hears, and feels, and understands, and talks, wholly from the Light and Sense of Wrath : All his Faculties are only so many Faculties of Wrath ; and he has no Sense or Knowledge but what his enlightened Wrath discovers to him. These Instances are sufficient to shew, that the State of our Life governs the State of our Mind, and forms the Degree and Manner of our Understanding and Knowledge ; and that, therefore, there is no Possibility of knowing God and divine Truths, *till our Life is divine, and wholly dead to the Life and Spirit of this World.*

The *Philosophers* of old began all their Virtue, in a total Renunciation of the Spirit of this World : They saw, with the Eyes of Heaven, that Darknes was not more contrary to Light, than the Wisdom of this World was contrary to the Spirit of Virtue ; therefore, they allowed of no Progress in Virtue, but so far as a Man had overcome himself, and the Spirit of this World. This gave a divine Solidity to all their Instructions, and proved them to be Masters of true
Wisdom.

Wisdom. But the Doctrine of THE CROSS OF CHRIST, the last, the highest, the finishing Stroke given to the Spirit of this World, which speaks more in one Word than all the Philosophy of voluminous Writers; is yet professed by those, who are in more Friendship with the World, than was allowed to the Disciples of *Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, or Epictetus.*

Nay, if those ancient Sages were to start up amongst us with their divine Wisdom, they would bid fair to be treated by the Sons of the Gospel, if not by some *Fathers* of the Church, as dreaming *Enthusiasts*. But it is a standing Truth, that "*The World can only love its own, and Wisdom can only be justified of her Children.*" The Heaven-born *Epictetus* told one of his Scholars, that "then he might first look upon himself, as having made some true Proficiency in Virtue, when the World took him for a Fool;" an Oracle like that, which said, "*The Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God.*" (1 Cor. i. 21. Chap. iii. 19. iv. 10.)

If it be asked, what is the *Apostasy* of these last Times, or whence is the *Degeneracy* of the present Christian-Church, it is all the Progeny of a *worldly* Spirit. If here we see open Wickedness, there only Forms of Godliness; if here superficial Holiness, political Piety, crafty Prudence; there, haughty Sanctity, partial Zeal, envious Orthodoxy; if, almost every where, we find a Jewish Blindness, and Hardness of Heart, and the Church trading with the Gospel, as visibly as the old Jews bought and sold Beasts in their Temple; all this is only so many Forms and proper Fruits of the worldly Spirit. This is the great Chain with which the Devil binds and enslaves Mankind; and every Son of Man is held captive in it, till through, and by, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he breaks from it. Nothing else can deliver him from it; Nothing leaves the World, Nothing renounces it, Nothing can possibly overcome it, but THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, who resisted it even to Blood, the Blood of his Cross. Hence it is, that many learned Men, with all the rich Furniture of their Brain, live and die Slaves to the Spirit
of

of this World ; and can only differ from gross Worldlings, as the Scribes and Pharisees differed from Publicans and Sinners : It is because THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST is not the one only Thing that is the Desire of their Hearts ; and, therefore, their Learning only works in and with the Spirit of this World, and becomes itself no small Part of the “ Vanity of Vanities.”

“ Nothing does or can keep GOD out of the Soul, “ or hinder his holy Union with it, but its desire turned *from him* ;” for with whatever the Will worketh, with *that* only the Soul liveth, whether it be GOD or the Creature : Whatever the Soul desireth, that is the Fewel of its Fire ; and as its Fewel is, so is the Flame of its Life. A Will given up to earthly Enjoyments, is at Grass with Nebuchadnezzar, and has one Life with the Beasts of the Field ; for earthly Desires keep up the same Life in a Man and an Ox. For the one only Reason, why the Animals of this World have no Sense or Knowledge of GOD, is because they cannot form any other than earthly Desires, and so can only have an earthly Life : When, therefore, a Man wholly turneth his Will to earthly Desires, he dies to the Excellency of his original and natural State, and may be said only to live, and move, and have his Being in the Life of this World, as the Beasts have. Earthly Food, &c. only desired, and used, for the Support of the earthly Body, is suitable to Man’s present Condition, and the Order of Nature ; but when the Desire and *Delight* of the Soul are set upon earthly Things, the Humanity is degraded, is fallen from GOD, and the Life of the Soul is made as earthly and bestial, as the Life of the Body ; “ for the Creature can be neither “ higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, than as “ its Will worketh. What it desireth, that it taketh ; “ and of that it eateth and liveth : Wherever, and in “ whatever, the Will chooseth to dwell and *delight*, *that* “ becometh the Soul’s Food, its Condition, its Body, “ its Clothing, and Habitation. Nothing doth, nor “ can, go with a Man into *Heaven*, nothing followeth “ him into *Hell*, but *that* in which the Will dwelt, with “ which

" which it was fed, nourished, and clothed in this
 " Life. Death can make no Alteration of this State
 " of the Will; it only takes off the outward, worldly
 " Covering of Flesh and Blood, and forces the Soul to
 " see, and feel, and know, what a Life, what a State,
 " Food, Body, and Habitation, its own working Will
 " has brought forth for it. Is there, therefore, any
 " Thing in Life that deserves a Thought, but how to
 " keep this Working of our Will in a right State; and
 " to get *that* PURITY OF HEART, which alone can
 " see, and know, and find, and possess God? Is there
 " any Thing so frightful as this worldly Spirit, which
 " turns the Soul *from* God; makes it a House of Dark-
 " ness, and feeds it with the Food of Time, at the
 " Expence of all the Riches of Eternity?"

Now as the whole Nature of Gospel-Redemption
 means nothing but the one, true, and only possible
 Way, of delivering Man from all the Evil of his Fall—
 a Fall demonstrable to the Senses and Understanding of
 every Man, by every Height and Depth of Nature, by
 every Kind of Evil, Sin, and Misery in the World, by
 every Thing he knows of God, himself, and the World
 he lives in;—Christianity is not only the most desirable
 Thing that the Heart of Man can think of; but the
 most intelligible, and even *self-evident*. It requires not
 the Aid of Learning for its Support; it stands upon a
 Foundation superior to *human Learning*, and may be the
 sure Possession of every *plain Man*, who has Sense enough
 to know, whether he is happy or unhappy, good or
 evil. For this natural Knowledge, if adhered to, is
 every Man's sure Guide to that one Salvation preached
 by the Gospel; which Gospel stands in no more Need
 of Learning and *critical* Art now, than it did when
 CHRIST was preaching it upon Earth. How absurd
 would it have been for any Critics in Greek and
 Hebrew, to have followed CHRIST and his Apostles,
 as necessary Explainers of their Words, which called
 for nothing in the Hearers, but *penitent* Hearts turned
 to God; and declared, that " *they only who were of*
 " *GOD, could hear the Word of GOD!*" How strange,
 that

that Christ should choose only illiterate Men to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, if only great Scholars could rightly understand what they said! If none but *learned Men* have the true Fitness to understand the Word of Scripture, and the *plain Man* is to receive it from *them*; how must he know, which are the Scholars that have the *right Knowledge*? Whence is he to have his Information? For no one need be told, that, ever since Learning, instead of the Divine Teaching, John vi. 45. has borne Rule in the Church, learned Doctors have contradicted and condemned each other, in every essential Point of the Christian Doctrine: Thousands of learned Men tell the Illiterate, they are lost in this or that Church; and Thousands of learned Men tell them, they are lost if they leave it. If, therefore, Christianity is in the Hands of Scholars, how must the plain Man come at it? Must he, though unable to understand Scripture for Want of Learning, tell *which learned Man is in the Right*, and *which is not*? If so, the unlearned Man must have far the greatest Ability, since he is to do *that* for Scholars, which they cannot do for *themselves*!—

But *Christian Redemption* is GOD'S MERCY TO ALL MANKIND; and every fallen Man, as such, has a Fitness or Capacity to lay Hold of it. It has no Dependence upon Times and Places, or the Ages and several Conditions of the World, or any outward Circumstance of Life; as the first Man partook of it, so must the last: The learned Linguist, the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, have but one and the same common Way of finding Life in it; and he that writes large Commentaries upon the Bible, must be saved by Something full as different from Book-Knowledge, as he who can neither write nor read.*

For

* There are *two Ways* of embracing Christianity; the one is as a *Sinner*, and the other as a *Scholar*: The former is the Way taught by Christ and his Apostles; the latter is the Invention of Men, fallen from the first Spirit and Truth of the Christian Life under the Power of natural Reason and verbal Learning.—And these *two Ways* are not to be considered as only the one better than the other, but in such a Difference, as *Right* and *Wrong*, *true* and *false*, bear to one another.

For

For this Salvation of a Sinner by a *crucified JESUS*, who was delivered for Man's Offences, and raised again for his Justification; this Mercy of God to the fallen Soul, merely as fallen, must be Something that meets every Man; and to which every Man, as fallen, has Something that directs him to turn. For as the Fall of Man is the *Reason* of this Mercy, so the Fall must be the *Guide* to it; the Want must shew the Thing that is wanted. (Matt. ix. 12.) And, therefore, the Manifestation of this one Salvation, or Mercy to Man, must have a Nature suitable, not to this or that great Reader of History, or able Critic in Hebrew Roots and Greek Phrases, but suitable to the common State and Condition of every Son of Adam: It must be Something as grounded in human Nature, as the Fall itself is; which wants no *Art* to make it known, but to which the common Nature of Man is the sure and only Guide, in one Man as well as another. Now this *Something*, which is thus obvious to every Man, and which opens the Way to Christian Redemption in every Soul, is "A *Sense* of the Vanity and Misery of this
" World;

For there is no Possibility of entering, or taking one progressive Step in Christianity, but as a *Sinner*; for it has no Errand but to the Sinner, has no Relief but for Sin; and nothing can receive it but the Heart wounded and wearied with the Burden of its own Sin. All the Gospel is but a foreign Tale, a dead Letter to the most logically learned Man in the World, who does not feel and find, in the Depth of his Soul, that all the Reasonableness and Excellency of Gospel-Truth, lies in that Fund of Sin, Impurity and corrupt Tempers, which are and must be inseparable from him, till in Christ Jesus he is born again from above.—Every other Confession of the Reasonableness, and Excellency of the Christian Religion, but that which the *Conviction* of Sin and Misery in the Soul, makes of it, is but like the Praise of a *Stander-by*, who commends Something in which he has no Concern.—As no Man ever came to Christ, but because he was weary, and heavy-laden with the Burden of his own natural Disorder, and wanted Rest to his disturbed Soul; so Nothing can help Man to find the Necessity of coming to Christ, but *that* which helps him to find and feel a Misery of Sin and Corruption; which in some, the Cares and Pleasures of this Life, and in others, the Happiness of finding themselves Wits, and polite Scholars, never suffered them to feel before.—No Son of *Adam*, do he what he will, can possibly come out of the Poverty, Shame, and Misery of his fallen State, till he finds and feels, and confesses from the Bottom of his Heart, all *that* which the *penitent Prodigal* (in St. Luke's Gospel, Chap. xv. 11--32.) found, felt, and confessed.

“ World; and a Prayer of Faith and Hope to GOD;
 “ to be raised to a better State.”

In this Sense, to which every Man's own Nature leads him, lies the Whole of Man's Salvation; here the Mercy of GOD, and the Misery of Man, are met together; here the Fall and the Redemption kiss each other. This is the Christianity, which is as old as the Fall; which alone saved the first Man, and can alone save the last. This is it, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, and which fulfils them both; for they have only this End, to turn Man from the Lusts of this Life, to a Desire, and Faith, and Hope of a better. Thus does the Whole of Christian Redemption, considered on the Part of Man, stand in the same Degree of Nearness and Plainness to all Mankind; it is as *simple and plain*, as the Feeling our own Evil and Misery; and as *natural*, as the Desire of being saved and delivered from it.

This Desire, and Faith, and Hope, of a NEW LIFE BORN OF GOD, as our only possible Redemption and Salvation, is THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER, that is as opposite to THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD, as Heaven is to Hell: The one goes *upwards* with the same Strength as the other goes *downwards*; the one espouses and unites us to CHRIST and GOD, with the same Certainty, as the other betroths and weds us to an earthly Nature. *The Spirit of Prayer* is a pressing forth of the Soul out of this earthly Life; it is a Stretching, with all its Desire, after THE LIFE OF GOD; it is a Leaving, as far as it can, all its *own* Spirit, to receive a Spirit from *above*, to be one Life, one Love, one Spirit with CHRIST in GOD. This Prayer, which is an Emptying itself of all its own Lusts and natural Tempers, and an Opening itself for the Light and Love of GOD to enter into it, is the Prayer in “ *the Name of CHRIST*,” to which nothing is denied: For the Love which GOD bears to the Soul, his eternal never-ceasing Desire to enter into it, to dwell in it, and open the Birth of his holy WORD and SPIRIT in it, stays no longer, than till the Heart opens to receive Him;

Him; for “ nothing does, or can, keep God out of
 “ the Soul, or hinder his holy Union with it, but the
 “ Desire of the Heart turned *from* Him.”

What, therefore, is so necessary for Man, as, with all his Strength, to turn from every Thing, that is not God, and his holy Will; and with all the Desire, Delight, and Longing of the Heart, to give up himself wholly to the Life, Light, and Spirit of God; pleased with nothing in this World, but as it gives Time, and Place, and Occasions, of doing and being *that*, which his heavenly Father would have him to do, and be; seeking for no Happiness from this earthly fallen Life, but that of overcoming all its Spirit and Tempers.

To conclude: In the full and true Knowledge of the Greatness of our Fall, and the Greatness of our Redemption, lie all the Reasons of a deep Humility, Penitence, and Self-Denial; and also all the Motives and Incitements to a most hearty, sincere, and total Conversion to God: And every one is necessarily more or less a true Penitent, and more or less truly converted to God, according as he is more or less deeply or inwardly *sensible* of these Truths. And till these two great Truths have both awakened and enlightened our Minds, all Reformation and Pretence to Amendment, is but a dead and superficial Thing; a mere Garment of Hypocrisy, to hide us from ourselves and others.

Nothing can truly awaken a Sinner, but a true Sense of the deep Possession and Power that Sin has in him. When he sees, that Sin begins with his Being, that it rises up in the Essences of his Nature, and lives in the first Forms of his Life; and that he lies thus chained and barred up in the very Jaws of Death and Hell, as unable to alter his own State as to create another Creature; when, with this Knowledge, he sees that the *free Grace* of God has provided him a Remedy equal to his Distress; that He has given him the *holy Blood* and Life of JESUS CHRIST, the true Son of God, to enter as deep into his Soul as Sin hath entered; to renew him in the Spirit of his Mind, to change the
 first

first Forms and Essences of his Life, and bring forth in them a new Birth of a Divine Nature, that is to be an immortal Image of THE HOLY TRINITY, everlastingly safe, enriched and blessed, in the Bosom of FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST: When a Man once truly knows and feels these *two Truths*, there seems to be no more that you need do for him. You can tell him of no Humility and Penitence, or Self-Abasement, but what is less than his own Heart suggests to him; Humility can only be feigned or false, before this Conviction: He can now no more take any Degree of Good to himself, than assume a Share in the Creation of Angels; and all Pride or Self-Esteem of any Kind, seems to him to contain as great a Lye in it, as if he was to say, that he helped to create himself.

You need not tell him, that he must turn unto God with "*all his Strength, all his Heart, all his Soul, and all his Spirit;*" for all that he can offer unto God, seems to him already less than the least of his Mercies towards him. He has so seen the exceeding Love of God in the Manner and Degree of his REDEMPTION by a crucified Jesus, that it would be the greatest Pain to him, to do any Thing but upon a Motive of Divine Love: As his Soul has found God to be all Love; so it has but one Desire, and that is, to be itself all Love of God.

This is the *Conviction* and *Conversion* that necessarily arises from a right Understanding of these Truths: The Soul is thereby wholly consecrated to God; and can like, or love, or do Nothing, but what it can, some Way or other, turn into a Service of Love towards its Redeemer: But where these Truths are not known, or not acknowledged, there it is not to be wondered at, if Religion has no Root, that is able to bring forth its proper Fruits, the Fruits of the Spirit. And if the Generality of Christians are a Number of dead, superficial Consenters to the History of Scripture-Doctrines; as unwilling to have the *Spirit*, as to part with the *Form* of their Religion; loth to hear of any Kind of Self-Denial, fond of worldly Ease, Indulgence, and Riches;

Riches; unwilling to be called to the Perfection of the Gospel, professing and practising Religion merely as the *Fashion* and *Custom* of the Place they are in requires; if some rest in outward Forms, others in a certain Orthodoxy of Opinions; if some expect to be saved by the Goodness of the Sect they are of, others by a certain Change of their outward Behaviour; if some content themselves with a lukewarm Spirit, and others depend upon their own Works; these are Delusions that must happen to all, who do not know, in some good Degree, the true Nature of their own fallen Soul, and what Kind of Regeneration can alone save them.*

But all these Errors, Delusions, and false Rests, are cut up by the Root, as soon as a Man knows the true Reason and Necessity of his wanting so GREAT A SAVIOUR. For he that knows the Essences of his Soul to be so many Essences of Sin, which form Sin as they form his Life, entirely incapable of producing any Good, till a Birth from God has arisen in them;—can neither place his Redemption where it is *not*, nor seek it coolly and negligently where it is.

For, knowing that it is the *Hell* within his own Nature, that only wants to be destroyed, he is intent only upon bringing Destruction on *that*; and this secures him from false Religion.—

And knowing that this *inward* Hell cannot be destroyed, unless God becomes his REDEEMER, or REGENERATOR, in the Essences of his Soul; this makes him believe all, expect all, and hope all, from his crucified Saviour JESUS CHRIST alone.

And knowing, that all this Redemption, or Salvation, is to be brought about in the inmost Ground and Depth of his Heart; this makes him always apply to God, as the God of his Heart: And, therefore, what he offers to God, is his own Heart; and this keeps him
always

* Hence it is, that Papists and Protestants are hating, fighting, and killing one another for the Sake of their *different, excellent* Opinions; and yet, as to the *Lusts of the Flesh*, the *Lust of the Eye*, and the *Pride of Life*, they are in the highest Union and Communion with one another.

always spiritually alive, wholly employed and intent upon the true Work of Religion, the fitting and preparing his Heart for all the Operations of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT upon it. And so he is a true inward Christian, who, as our blessed LORD speaks, has "*The Kingdom of GOD, Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, within him;*" and where the State and Habit of his Heart continually, and thankfully, "WORSHIPS THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH."

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